

MEMBER NEWS

Focus on a Federation Member: The Perry-Weston Educational and Cultural Institute, Inc.

By C. Rudolph Knight and Lawrence W. S. Auld, Ph.D., Perry-Weston Educational and Cultural Institute

The Perry-Weston Educational and Cultural Institute, Inc., promotes African American history, genealogy, culture, and arts in Edgecombe County and all of North Carolina. The Institute also promotes the conservation of selected African American buildings, sites, and records of Tarboro and Edgecombe County and the surrounding area. The Institute sponsors classes, lectures, exhibits, demonstrations, publications, and special projects and programs.

The Institute is named for the Reverend John W. Perry, the first rector of St. Luke's Colored Protestant Episcopal Church in Tarboro, N.C., and for his daughter, Mrs. Catherine Perry Weston. Mrs. Weston was the wife of the Reverend Milton Moran Weston (the second rector of St. Luke's); the mother of the Reverend Dr. Milton Moran Weston Jr. (rector of St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in Harlem in New York City); and the great-aunt of the Reverend Dr. Kwasi Thornell (an Episcopalian priest formerly with the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.)

In addition to serving as the first rector of St. Luke's Colored Protestant Episcopal Church, the Reverend John W. Perry worked with his wife Mrs. Mary Eliza Pettipher Perry to operate St. Luke's Parochial School, which opened in September 1881 and ran until 1957. In later years, it was operated by their daughter, Mrs. Catherine Perry Weston, and her husband, the Reverend M.M. Weston. The

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Perry School was on Panola Street adjacent to the Mount Lebanon Masonic Hall in Tarboro.

Since August 2011, the Institute has sponsored or co-sponsored the following events:

- Book signing for *From Water Street to East Tarboro, Kechtown, and The Depot: Tarboro African American Neighborhoods*, by C. Rudolph Knight and Lawrence W. S. Auld, Ph.D., published by the Perry-Weston Institute
- Book talk by Nathan Garrett at the Princeville Museum
- Presentations on aspects of African-American History of Rocky Mount at Foster Memorial Baptist Church; at Mount Pisgah Presbyterian Church; and at the Mt. Zion Noon Day Prayer Group
- Talk by Alice Eley Jones on African-American enslaved artisans in North Carolina at the Princeville Museum
- Book talk by Melvin Ray Hart on "The Saga of Freedom Hill: A Story of the Town of Princeville" that he coauthored with Mary Ward Matthewson, at the Princeville Museum
- Book talk by Warren A. Rhodes on *Where Is My Daddy?* at the Princeville Museum
- African-American Heritage Days for 477 fourth grade students from Pattillo, Coker-Wimberly, Princeville, and Bullock Elementary Schools. Activities included demonstrations of hand-made soap, iron-pot washing and ironing of clothes, and quilting.
- Presentation on the history of the Douglas Block in Rocky Mount at the newly renovated Booker T. Theater
- On Saturday, November 12, 2011, the Perry-Weston Institute, the Princeville Museum, and the Town of Princeville celebrated Veterans' Day with the premiere presentation of the play *Sojourner and Her Children: A Family Drama of Love*. The celebration was held

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at the Princeville Museum and Welcome Center.

- The program "Edgecombe County Rosenwald Schools History Collection" was presented on February 4, 2012, at the Edgecombe County Administration Building Auditorium with Bettie Murchison, a Rosenwald Schools scholar, as the featured speaker. The program was jointly sponsored by the Perry-Weston Institute and the Edgecombe County Extension Center.
- Black Movies Series, February 21, 2012, at Edgecombe County Memorial Library. Jointly sponsored by Perry-Weston Institute and Edgecombe County Memorial Library.
- Presentation on influential Rocky Mount African Americans, featuring the Rev. Dr.

Clifton Coles, Montford Point Marine, at Mt. Pisgah Presbyterian Church,

- Dr. Florence Arnold Armstrong received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award in a special program at the Princeville Museum on Saturday, March 10, 2012. The Award, which was conferred by Governor Beverly Perdue, was presented to Dr. Armstrong by Leonard Wiggins, Chair of the Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners. The program was arranged by the Perry-Weston Institute.
- May 2012 was designated as "Rosenwald School Month" by the Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners.
- Recognition by the Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners of six former Rosenwald

School Teachers in Edgecombe County, May 7, 2012.

- Book signing at Roberson School for *The Education of a Generation: The Rosenwald Schools and Other African American Schools in Edgecombe County, a Preliminary History*, by C. Rudolph Knight and Lawrence W. S. Auld, Ph.D., published by the Perry-Weston Institute.

The Institute is planning a number of events in 2013 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

For more information about the Perry-Weston Educational and Cultural Institute, please send an email to Rudolph.Knight@gmail.com or write to 200 East Baker Street, Tarboro, NC 27886-3804.

N.C. Museum of History Receives Grant, NASA Artifacts

The N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh has received a grant of \$15,000 from the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation for the traveling exhibit *Art in Clay*, opening March 8, 2013. *Art in Clay* celebrates the achievements of North Carolina's earliest earthenware potters. It will include nearly 200 objects from distinguished public and private collections. The exhibit is sponsored by Old Salem Museums & Gardens, the Chipstone Foundation, and the Caxamabas Foundation.

In other news, on October 4 Dr. William Thornton, a former NASA scientist-astronaut, visited the N.C. Museum of History to donate the NASA flight suit, flight boots, and other items he used as a crew member of the space shuttle STS-8 *Challenger* in 1983. STS-8 was the first NASA space shuttle mission with a night launch and a night landing.

Thornton, a native of Faison, received a bachelor's degree in physics and a doctorate in medicine from UNC-Chapel Hill. He was selected as a scientist-astronaut by NASA in August 1967. A veteran of two space flights, Thornton served as a mission specialist on STS-8 *Challenger* and on STS-51B *Challenger* in 1985. He has logged more than 313 hours in space.

"It isn't every day that a museum can add objects that have been in outer space to its collection," said RoAnn Bishop, Curator of Agriculture, Industry and Economic Life. "The North Carolina Museum of History is honored to receive from such a distinguished North Carolinian as Dr. Thornton these objects that represent the United States' space industry."

For more information about the N.C. Museum of History, call (919) 807-7900 or visit ncmuseumofhistory.org.